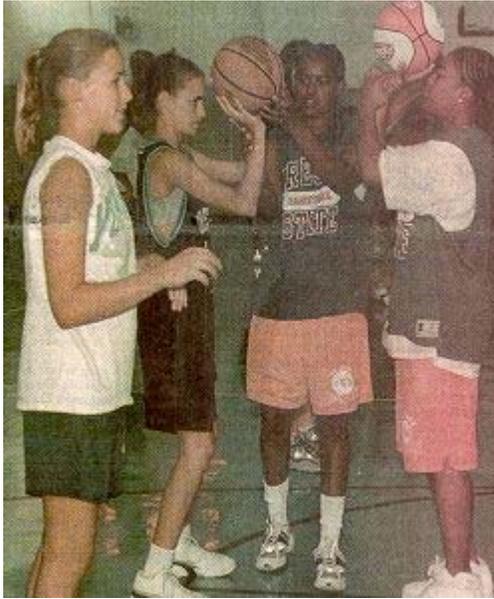


## Learnin' from the pros

by Lacey Rees  
of the Sierra Star



Karris Blate and Jena Harper, of Yosemite Youth basketball, get ball-handling pointers from Fresno State womens basketball players, freshmen Joanna Barnes and Lauren Stayton, at a mini basketball camp held in Oakhurst last Saturday.

Mountain Area girls who play basketball with the Yosemite Youth Basketball Association had a real treat last Saturday.

For the first time, the whole Fresno State womens basketball team and its coaches came up to Oakhurst to conduct a mini basketball camp for the younger girls.

The girls basketball team from Oak Creek Intermediate School, where the camp was held, and other eighth-graders from the Mountain Area were also invited.

The nearly 30 girls in the 12-and-under age group, mainly sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders, spent about four hours with the college players learning skills and executing some short competitive drills.

### Review basic skills

“They reviewed basic ball-handling skills,” says Rick Slayton, assistant coach for the mountain players. In basketball language, they learned triple-threat movements, sweeps, shot fakes and jabs.

They also learned how to correctly execute a one-hand pass, two-hand pass, cross-over dribbles and between-the-leg dribbles.

In addition to being able to learn ball handling first hand from the college team, the mountain girls were also invited to sit in at a CSUF women’s basketball practice in Fresno and were offered tickets to upcoming games.

After the camp, the girls commented how much they got out of the drills, “getting back to basics,” says Mr. Slayton.

“It was also nice,” he adds, for the younger girls “to know that the big girls did the same basic drills, just like [the Yosemite Youth] do.”

After the drills, the mountain girls hosted a barbecue for the Fresno State team.

Fresno State assistant coach Tonya Alleyne, speaking to the girls, said that, “We are all student athletes,” stressing the word “student.” Grades and academics come first, she said, adding that education is the most important part of an athlete’s college career.

“We invited [Fresno State team] to come up and give our girls some training, and let [our girls] see what it is like when they get to this level,” says Elfie Slayton, a local parent.

### Yosemite Youth team

There are 10 members of the Yosemite Youth team which includes girls from all communities in the Mountain Area.

Yosemite Youth basketball is a traveling team formed after the National Junior Basketball League [NJBL] ended in March.

The NJBL is comprised of teams from each Mountain Area school, and they played

games with each other on Sunday afternoons during the winter.

The new Yosemite Youth team is made up of an all-star team, mostly Mountain Area girls, which was formed at the end of the regular season.

The travel team, which plays tournaments in the Valley, and even Reno, during the summer, now plays above the level of competition in the NJBL, says Mrs. Slayton.

Although the new team did not win a lot of games in this, their first year of competition, "it was a good learning experience for them," she adds.

The girls will play during the winter in some tournaments and will also play on their schools' teams as well.

The girls plan to hone their skills to be ready for high school play after eighth grade.

There are some who hope they may also be followed by university basketball scouts, perhaps to be invited to play for the college after they graduate from high school.

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